ROOTED

POWERBOOK:

Action Steps for Investing Directly in People to Prevent Displacement through Wealth Building

INVEST STL

How-to Guide
2025

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Intro

Rooted Overview + Mission

Rooted: Cultivating Black Wealth in Place is an anti-displacement pilot designed to build wealth for Black residents in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods of St. Louis. As development and speculative real estate activity have increased significantly in these neighborhoods over the last decade, the *Rooted* initiative investigates wealth building as an anti-displacement strategy.

The initiative provides 50 Black residents, known as "resident investors," in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods with $2,000 to address immediate financial needs, such as paying down debt or creating an emergency savings account, and a $20,000 investment to support long-term wealth building. This investment may be used to **purchase property** in the neighborhoods, **complete property repairs or upgrades** in the neighborhoods, **start or grow a small business** in the neighborhoods, or **add to an investment account**. The initiative also provides the resident investors with a Certified Financial Planner at no expense to assist with building a personalized plan to build wealth and help resident investors reach their goals.

This How-to Guide section of the *Rooted Powerbook: Action Steps for Investing Directly in People to Prevent Displacement through Wealth Building* aims to provide a blueprint to replicate the initiative while allowing space to customize for the unique needs of each community. While the Powerbook Overview introduces you to the initiative and provides a broad summary of the *Rooted* initiative, this Powerbook How-to Guide provides specific recommendations and key considerations for each step of the process. You can download the full Powerbook with both the Overview and How-to Guide here.

We encountered a wide range of experiences as we developed and evaluated our pilot project. By sharing these learnings from our journey, we hope to help you launch similar initiatives, save time on planning, and avoid some of the challenges we faced.

THE REPLICATION PROCESS IN THIS HOW-TO GUIDE IS SEGMENTED INTO THREE DISTINCT PHASES:

1. **Phase 1: Planning**

   The Planning Phase guides the framing and design of your project, including considering the major decisions you'll need to make.

2. **Phase 2: Recruitment + Selection**

   The Recruitment + Selection Phase guides the development of your messaging, marketing, and outreach plan, including steps to open your application and select participants.

3. **Phase 3: Implementation**

   The Implementation Phase guides your work with resident investors, their partnership with financial planners, and other wraparound support.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HOW-TO GUIDE

Timeframe and staffing

The timeframe and estimated staffing needs for each phase will be unique to your circumstances; however, we've provided estimates to help guide your planning based on our experience working with 50 resident investors.

Building on existing community relationships

While the How-to Guide walks you through the comprehensive process of enacting a project from start to finish, please note that we strongly encourage you to consider replication in an area where you already have established relationships, presence, and community trust. This foundation will greatly improve your chances of success.

Large cash transfer

Although *Rooted* can be a tool for launching many types of projects, this How-to Guide is specifically designed to help those wanting to create a large cash transfer project. Therefore, this How-to Guide assumes that you have already decided on a large cash transfer project to meet your identified community need.

Fundraising

This How-to Guide intentionally excludes information on raising funds for your project. There are numerous resources available that provide tips on fundraising, and since the level of fundraising needed for each project will vary significantly, we determined that this was not needed in this How-to Guide.

Rooted Replication Checklist of Major Steps

PHASE 1

PLANNING

- ☐ Identify Community Needs
- ☐ Pinpoint Who Will Benefit
- ☐ Specify Project Goals
- ☐ Establish Guiding Principles
- ☐ Create a Purpose Statement
- ☐ Convene a Planning Committee
- ☐ Build Relationships + Trust
- ☐ Narrow Your Focus Area
- ☐ Choose Wealth-Building Strategies
- ☐ Determine Investment Amount + Scale
- ☐ Create Eligibility Criteria
- ☐ Recruit Financial Planners
- ☐ Identify Partners + Volunteers to Advise Resident Investors
- ☐ Design the Application Process
- ☐ Determine Fund Disbursement
- ☐ Determine Project Evaluation Needs

PHASE 2

RECRUITMENT + SELECTION

- ☐ Create an Outreach + Communications Plan
- ☐ Tailor Messaging
- ☐ Create Your Visual Brand + Materials
- ☐ Spread the Word
- ☐ Begin Application + Monitoring Process
- ☐ Host Pre-Selection Meetings
- ☐ Select Participants

PHASE 3

IMPLEMENTATION

- ☐ Onboard Financial Planners
- ☐ Onboard Resident Investors
- ☐ Match Resident Investors with Financial Planners
- ☐ Initiate Financial Planning Sessions
- ☐ Provide Wealth-Building Wraparound Supports
- ☐ Allocate Resident Investor Funds
- ☐ Host Optional Workshops
- ☐ Address Ongoing Evaluation Needs

HOW-TO GUIDE PHASE 1

Planning

1

ESTIMATED TIMEFRAME
1 year

ESTIMATED STAFF TIME
1 full-time person

STAFF PROFICIENCIES
Project management, facilitation, visioning, and partner recruitment

The Planning phase sets the stage for replicating the *Rooted: Cultivating Black Wealth in Place* initiative. This phase is crucial for establishing your project's direction and vision. It will help you start building a solid foundation by framing your project effectively. Gather input from the residents of the community your project aims to support, and consider demographic, community, or other available data to determine the purpose of your project. Once the framing of your project is complete, the next step in the Planning phase is to get more specific about your project's parameters in response to community input and identify other partners that can help advance the project's planning and implementation.

1. Identify Community Needs

Clarify the driving forces behind your project by defining the challenges your community is facing. Pinpointing the core problems your project will address enables everyone involved to understand the project's purpose and ensures that the project meets actual community needs.

Reflect on these questions:

- What specific problems does your project aim to solve?
- Are there significant wealth gaps between people in your community?
- Does everyone have equitable opportunities for building wealth?
- Are there signs of gentrification or displacement?
- Do people need immediate assistance or more in-depth support?
- Do people have enough wealth to pass down to future generations?
- What has changed in the community? What has remained the same?
- How have these changes impacted community members?

After identifying the challenges in your community, you can determine possible solutions. A single project cannot meet every community need, so it is important to prioritize the community's needs and design your project accordingly.

Reflect on these questions:

- In what ways can a large cash transfer project help meet the challenges in my community?
- What has already been tried? If a solution has been tried, was it successful? Why or why not?

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

The West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods in St. Louis began to experience signs of gentrification. While residents felt excited about seeing less vacancy in their neighborhoods, they were worried increased prices would push long-time residents out of the neighborhood. Additionally, with rising home values, residents wanted to make sure they could maintain their homes as an asset to pass down to future generations.

Our initiative attempts to meet community needs regarding preventing displacement and building wealth. A large cash transfer project was the most appropriate intervention because it addresses these needs by providing residents flexibility in how they use their funds to build wealth for themselves and their families. For example, a renter may use funds to purchase a house, while a homeowner may use their funds for home repair.

2. Pinpoint Who Will Benefit

Determine who your project will benefit while being intentional in considering the needs your community has identified. Consider demographic, community, or other available data and speak with people in the community to get an understanding of who your project can most impact.

Reflect on these questions:

- What are the current socioeconomic groups in the community?
- Who is benefiting from current community changes? Who is not?
- What groups hold together the fabric of the community?
- What supports currently exist? Where are supports lacking?
  Be sure to keep equity in mind when considering where support is needed.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Based on our work with a neighborhood group and the local Community Development Corporation in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods, we learned that a group of residents had already been meeting to discuss how to build generational wealth amid concerns about displacement. That suggested that this initiative could be well-suited for this community.

Data showed that renters with fewer economic resources have the highest risk for displacement; however, in speaking with community members, we also heard that seniors/older adults who own homes are at risk for displacement when their houses become too expensive to maintain. At the time, there wasn't enough support to help either group with the challenges they faced. Therefore, we focused the *Rooted* initiative to benefit long-time residents who were renters and homeowners with low-to-moderate income.

3. Specify Project Goals

Set clear goals to help focus your project effectively. By clarifying your goals, you will be better equipped to make decisions and identify solutions.

Follow these steps:

1. Establish an overarching goal and break it down into sub-goals, objectives, or milestones.
2. Define learning goals and metrics to evaluate the project's effectiveness.
3. Create indicators based on these goals that signal success.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Aligned to the community's self-identified needs, our overarching goal was to support **long-term renters and homeowners in avoiding displacement so that they could remain in the neighborhood if they chose to**. We wanted to explore wealth building as a way to ensure long-time residents could afford to stay in their neighborhood. We also wanted to learn what types of support would best help people build wealth.

For our evaluation, we identified metrics around wealth building and which types of wealth building strategies produced the best results. We also included metrics on preventing displacement.

We identified indicators that would demonstrate that the initiative was impactful, including:

People can afford to remain in their neighborhood.	The neighborhood continues to reflect the culture and vision of the existing community.	Families have assets that can be passed down generationally.

4. Establish Guiding Principles

Agreeing on guiding principles early in the planning process creates clarity and helps uphold the overall vision throughout the project. These principles will inform decisions at every phase, guide how you interact with partners, and shape project strategies. Consistently referring to these principles will help maintain alignment with your organizational values in support of the community.

Reflect on these questions:

- What are your organization's values?
- What values do community members uphold?
- In what ways can you work to reinforce the dignity of the community you are focusing on?
- How will your work differ from historical work that may have harmed communities or been less successful?
- How will you build relationships in ways that are authentic and not just transactional?

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Invest STL established guiding principles early on when we were beginning to create the concept for the *Rooted* initiative as a way to ensure our work upheld our values and vision for the initiative. As we engaged with new partners throughout the initiative, we referred back to these often to reinforce our fundamental values. We established the following guiding principles:

Participant choice is essential.	Funds provided are not loans.
We trust people to make decisions that serve their needs and dreams.	We prioritize wealth building over financial literacy.
This is an investment in people because it's owed, not earned (not merit-based).	This project is neighborhood-focused.

5. Create a Purpose Statement

Combine your challenge, project beneficiaries, goals, and guiding principles to create your purpose statement. The purpose statement should identify who will benefit from your solution, the key challenge it addresses, and the primary method(s) that will be explored in addressing that challenge. Combining these components into one statement can help maintain alignment with your values and provide focus for the objective of your project.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Together, we created the following purpose statement:

> **As the West End and Visitation Park communities are experiencing gentrification and are becoming increasingly concerned with potential displacement of long-time residents, *Rooted* will support long-time renters and homeowners in building wealth as a way to prevent displacement from the community and ensure assets are maintained for the next generation. Our pilot project will focus on wealth building in a way that is dignified, maintains individual choice and autonomy, is trust-based, and is neighborhood-focused.**

6. Convene a Planning Committee

Assemble a diverse planning committee of subject matter experts, including those in community development, finance, policy, and nonprofit sectors. To ensure your project is well-rounded and effective, prioritize having varied perspectives and lived experiences on your planning committee. This will enrich your project, provide valuable insights, and offer holistic input throughout the entire process. Understand each committee member's interests and align them with the project's goals. You can also ask members about their motivations and what success looks like to them.

Prior to engaging your planning committee, determine what decisions your organization will make ahead of time and what decisions you want to make with the planning committee. That will help determine at what point you begin convening your planning committee.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

While developing *Rooted*, we formed a planning committee to convene diverse perspectives. Our team included **Mass Economics**, experts on urban economic growth and equity; the **Center for Civic Research and Innovation**, a St. Louis-based data partner; the **Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis**, Community Development Research Advisor; a financial planner, who helped us understand the financial planning sector; and our funding partner, **Wells Fargo**, who assisted us in connecting with other supportive partners.

Our first planning committee meeting began by introducing the initiative's concept, beginning with our purpose statement, specific goals, and guiding principles. As an organization, we knew we wanted to help long-term Black residents in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods avoid displacement. However, there were still many important decisions to be made, and we needed robust community data and background to further shape the initiative.

As a group, we generated a list of what decisions the planning committee would make, including:

- What is the specific footprint or geographic boundary for the initiative?
- What wealth-building strategies will we offer?
  - What are the individual investment caps for each?
  - Will participants have to spend their funds in one category?
- Who is eligible to participate in this initiative?
- How many participants ("resident investors," as we call them) can we have?
- How much money will each resident investor receive?
- What other support will resident investors need, and what other organizations could provide that support?
- How will we select resident investors?
- What do we want to evaluate, and what methods will we use?

Each meeting was dedicated to making one specific decision to ensure we had ample time to discuss and decide without feeling overwhelmed by a packed agenda. To better equip our planning committee in advance of each meeting, each meeting agenda clearly outlined the decision to be made.

Before each meeting, we asked committee members what information they would need to make an informed decision at the upcoming meeting. This process gave us time to gather the necessary data and insights prior to the next meeting. Then that information was presented at the next meeting as part of the in-depth discussion. This method ensured everyone had the information needed to make a well-informed choice.

For instance, when deciding whether to focus our initiative on the entire neighborhood or specific census tracts within the neighborhood, we knew it was important to first understand the demographic differences within those tracts. We then presented this information at our planning committee meeting and discussed the data as we aligned on our decision. This enabled the committee to make a knowledgeable and informed decision.

There were several instances when the planning committee disagreed on specific components of the initiative. But because we already created our guiding principles, we referred to them to align our focus and navigate the group decision-making process while still creating space for debate.

7. Build Relationships + Trust

Gain the trust of the community by building and fostering relationships with community members as you are designing and promoting your project. Building relationships takes time but is critical to the overall success of your project. Overlooking this step can lead to a misguided effort and to negative perceptions of your project.

You may be working in a community that has been promised big changes in the past. Demonstrating your commitment to the community reinforces that you are working alongside the community and its members, addressing their needs and aspirations in a genuine, non-exploitative manner. As you build relationships, be responsive and show up within the community.

Throughout your planning, engage in direct communication with the community. This can involve convening ongoing listening sessions, facilitating a focus group of community members, or holding one-on-one meetings with community members and leaders. Listening to their concerns, hesitations, and suggestions will help you understand how best to design your project and approach the broader community. It also demonstrates your commitment to the community and working alongside them.

See practice exercises and reflection prompts to help build relationships and foster trust with community members in our **Invest STL *Resident-Led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook***.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Prior to launching *Rooted*, Invest STL had been working with a community group in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods for the past five years. Those relationships served as strong jumping-off points for initial conversations about the initiative and helped us create a list of other individuals who should be included in the work.

Our team started by holding one-on-one meetings with people in the neighborhood to discuss our initiative, gather input, and gain a deeper understanding of the community's needs and vision. We attended community meetings and events to get to know more people in the neighborhoods. This approach enabled us to devote time to building relationships and ensure clarity around the initiative. Community members who knew and trusted us also helped reassure their neighbors who were skeptical or had doubts about our intentions.

We also opened a new office in the neighborhood and prioritized making the space look professional and feel welcoming. This allowed residents to see who we are and what we are about. It also increased our approachability and credibility.

LESSONS LEARNED

Working in a neighborhood where we already had authentic relationships with community members gave us a solid foundation upon which to expand our network within the community.

Having an office in the community made it convenient for applicants and resident investors to interact with us. It also reinforced our legitimacy as an organization dedicated to investing in the neighborhood.

8. Narrow Your Focus Area

You may have had a specific community or focus area in mind when you began planning your project. However, after engaging with the community, building relationships, and gathering insights, you may decide to adjust your project footprint or focus area to better ensure your efforts align with residents' real needs and concerns. The possibility of misalignment between your priorities and those of the community is why identifying community needs, determining who will benefit, and engaging directly with the community are paramount to this process.

Take time to fully understand the geographic footprint using data to pinpoint areas within your initial area of focus that might be more affected than others. Data should be evaluated alongside community engagement to make sure the community and those within it are the appropriate recipients of your project's outcomes.

Consider the following:

- Where is this project most needed?
  - Is it in a specific zip code, neighborhood, a few specific census tracts, or a community defined in another way (such as a school district footprint or voting district)?

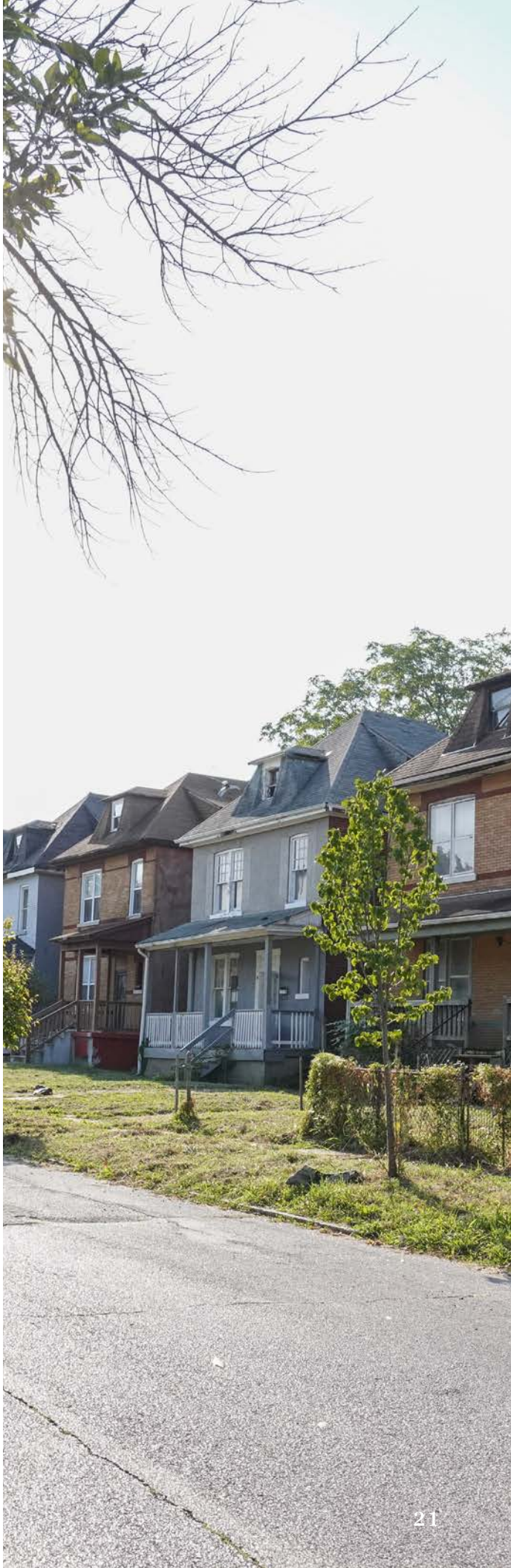
INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

To better understand displacement trends in the community, we worked with a data partner to examine trends in our focus neighborhoods. We researched existing wealth and debt, home valuations, in/out migration patterns, and investor purchasing patterns in the neighborhoods. Data confirmed residents' concerns and showed the specific blocks that were most affected. We decided to include all the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods as our footprint. We included blocks that were already undergoing gentrification but had not yet seen significant displacement, as well as blocks at risk for gentrification.

LESSONS LEARNED

Gaining a deeper understanding of the various stages of gentrification and displacement helped us determine how to narrow the focus area. Our focus area included census tracts that had already undergone gentrification and those at early risk for displacement. Since our initiative was designed to offer multiple options for wealth building that could support communities along the spectrum of gentrification, it made sense to include both neighborhoods and offer a variety of wealth-building supports instead of limiting the initiative to specific census tracts.

People in your footprint may identify their community in a way that is different from you. For example, many residents in the footprint we worked in identify their community as “the Westside,” although the City of St. Louis has distinct neighborhood boundaries for the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods. If you are using terms or boundaries that are different from how the community identifies itself, you will need to provide additional clarity and justification for those decisions and ensure everyone involved understands what you are referring to when using specific terms.



9. Choose Wealth-Building Strategies

Collaborate with your planning committee to explore the range of wealth-building strategies that could be made available to resident investors. You should evaluate which strategies have the most potential to impact community members by considering the benefits and limitations of each strategy. To determine which strategies are most needed, it's important to consult data and research on wealth-building strategies, talk to community members directly, and speak with other organizations that have managed projects that help people build wealth or provide direct cash assistance.

Once you have completed this research, your project should offer a range of wealth-building strategies that help meet the community's needs and aspirations. By presenting diverse wealth-building options, your project can reach more people and support their varying circumstances and wealth-building opportunities.

Potential strategies that impact wealth:

Purchasing property	Creating savings	Decreasing debt (e.g., mortgage, student loans, credit cards, car loans, overdue property taxes, etc.)
Making property improvements	Paying for education or tuition costs	
Starting, expanding, or investing in a small business	Investing in financial securities (e.g., stocks, bonds, etc.)	

Evaluating the benefits of each strategy helps determine the most appropriate options for your community.

Consider parameters such as:

- Should funds be equally distributed among different approaches, or should allocations vary?
- Can resident investors use their funds across multiple strategies, or must they choose only one?
- Is it necessary to restrict the kinds of strategies that can be used (due to funding constraints, legal limitations in your community, or other factors)?
- Is it useful to provide funding for immediate needs upfront while resident investors take more time to consider longer-term strategies?

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We selected the following four investment options to offer resident investors based on alignment with our goals of preventing displacement, building wealth, and remaining neighborhood-focused on the West End and Visitation Park communities and the needs of residents:

- Purchasing property within the footprint
- Making property improvements or renovations on a property that participants own within the footprint
- Starting or expanding a business within the footprint
- Opening or adding to an investment account

We selected these strategies because national historical data shows they have the potential to impact wealth building. Resident investors had the flexibility to mix and match the wealth-building strategies that best aligned with their unique financial goals.

We had an in-depth discussion about how traditional home repair and investment programs operate and how they align or don't align with our guiding principles. We wanted to ensure resident investors retained autonomy, choice, and trust throughout the use of their funds. Unlike many home repair programs, we chose not to require a lien on properties to ensure the owner occupies the home for a specific period after renovations.

Also, to ensure resident investors retained full control of the funds, we did not list ourselves as "custodians" of their investment accounts. We requested resident investors provide us with "view-only" access to their investment accounts to track their investment progress. With "view-only" access, we could see how their accounts were progressing and use the findings for the study without requiring the resident investors to provide us with the information.

LESSONS LEARNED

Resident investors greatly appreciated the flexibility and autonomy that came with being able to invest their funds in multiple ways. The flexibility and autonomy allowed them to choose how best to meet their needs without feeling constrained.

Not many resident investors were interested in purchasing property due to the inflated housing market in the neighborhood. Those who wanted to purchase property were unable to find affordable properties in the footprint, although there were more affordable houses for sale in surrounding areas outside the footprint. Consider the current housing market trends when planning and implementing your project.

> **To have the option to spend it on what you want. Because you have different options where you can invest in a property or you can buy a property, you can start a business. It was just exciting to know that I would have so many choices about how to spend the money.**
>
> - Starlynn

10. Determine Investment Amount + Scale

Establish how much funding each resident investor will receive in your project and how many resident investors can receive funds. The total amount of funds you allocate to each resident investor should be informed by the cost of living in your area and current market conditions. You'll have to weigh whether to provide less funding to more people or to provide greater funding to fewer people. Other considerations include the total funds you expect to have available, staff capacity for working with resident investors, and the amount of funds needed per resident investor to have a substantial impact.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We started our initiative with $1 million in funding. We decided how many resident investors would receive funds based on our goal of maximizing impact and creating a statistically significant sample size, which was needed to conduct a formal evaluation of the effort. While 100 residents would have provided an ideal sample size, we determined that $10,000 per resident investor wasn't enough to realistically impact wealth building due to local cost of living, down payment needs for our market, cost of home repairs, and household debt data.

Reflecting on market data, $40,000 would've been ideal. However, that would only allow for 25 residents to receive funding with our $1 million budget, which was not a large enough sample to have a measurable neighborhood impact or reliable data for potential scaling and replication. Working with our planning committee and evaluators, we determined that 50 resident investors would provide a statistically significant sample size, and providing $20,000 per resident investor presented a realistic opportunity to impact wealth building in the St. Louis market within the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods.

We also recognized it would not be realistic or reasonable for residents to ignore any existing financial burdens in favor of long-term wealth building. So, we raised additional funds to provide each resident investor with $2,000 to use for immediate financial needs, paying down debt, or creating an emergency savings account. We arrived at this amount by looking at the footprint's average unsecured household debt of $2,200. We discussed whether $2,000 would go to every resident investor or only to those who had an immediate need. If we provided additional funds only to those who expressed immediate needs at the beginning of the initiative, we might have excluded residents with unforeseen future emergencies. Ultimately, we decided to provide the funds to all resident investors so they could use them for current or future critical financial needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were several resident investors who had significant needs beyond the $2,000, including high debt, overdue property taxes, major car repairs, and housing instability. Unfortunately, we weren't equipped to address immediate needs that couldn't be covered by the initial $2,000. Consider how your project design could better address similar circumstances while still prioritizing long-term wealth-building.

We started planning this initiative at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic prior to construction prices greatly increasing, so we didn't anticipate the uptick in cost for home repairs. Resident investors who chose to use their funds for home improvements realized their funds did not go as far as expected.

11. Create Eligibility Criteria

In an earlier step, you identified the population you want to benefit from your project. In this step, you'll dial in by developing specific eligibility criteria for applicants. Your eligibility criteria should be verifiable information. Refer to your purpose statement and guiding principles to ensure your eligibility criteria align with these elements and the overall project.

Consider the following factors:

- Years of residency
- Employment status
- Age
- Household income
- Net worth
- Financial criteria (e.g., debt-to-income, asset limits, etc.)
- Race/ethnicity (see note on pg. 28)
- First-generation homeowner status
- Level of education
- Number of people in the household

Once your criteria are established, determine the documentation you will accept for verification. In collaboration with your planning committee, brainstorm a range of easily obtainable documents to make the application process accessible. The goal of creating eligibility criteria is to prioritize the people you want to benefit from your project, not to make the project difficult to access or navigate.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Our initiative prioritized helping long-term Black residents in the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods at risk of displacement.

Our eligibility criteria included:

Black households

We prioritized Black residents, reflecting our mission to provide people-focused, place-based opportunities within communities impacted by systemic anti-Black racism. The West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods have faced decades of intentional devaluation, historically limiting opportunities for wealth building and increasing vulnerability to displacement.

Please note that, in light of recent legal battles, race-based criteria may not be feasible for your project. Consider exploring alternative options that best align with your project's goals and your organization's mission.

25 years of age or older

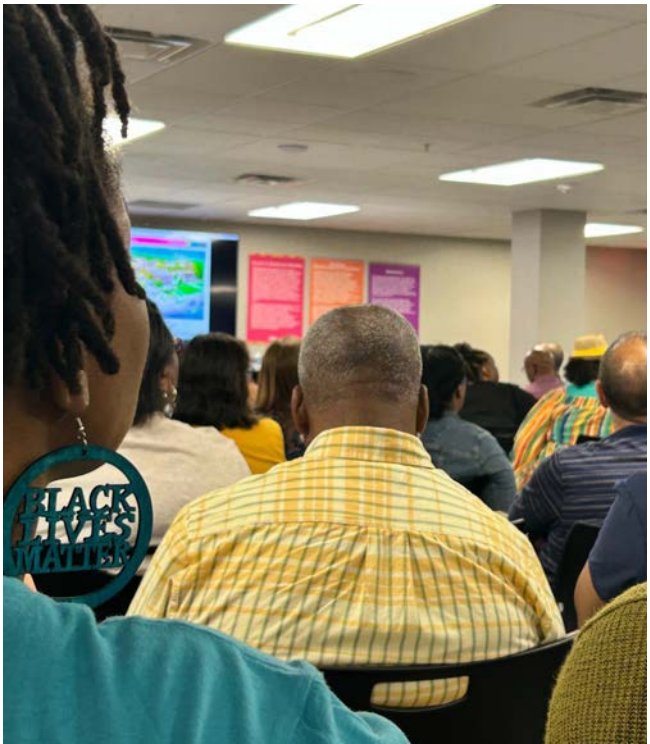
We focused on adults already settled in the community but intentionally kept the age range broad to support individuals in all stages of their lives with wealth building.

Neighborhood residency of at least six years

We aimed to help those who have established residency and lived in the neighborhood before significant market speculation began in 2017 (six years before the project launch).

Earn between 10 and 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI)

We focused on households with lower and middle incomes, recognizing that rising neighborhood costs can displace families across income levels. Setting the threshold at 10% ensured that resident investors had the income needed to benefit from this initiative.



LESSONS LEARNED

We considered limiting eligibility based on applicants' assets. However, we determined that proving asset ownership is challenging, and we didn't want to exclude older adults/seniors with pensions. As a result, we had three resident investors who met income and residency requirements but owned significant housing assets that they rented out. Since this initiative was intended to help those who lacked access to wealth-building mechanisms build wealth, we could have better narrowed eligibility to serve individuals without substantial assets. Consider how applicants' existing assets may affect eligibility for your project.

To verify household income eligibility with an easily obtainable form, participants submitted a page from their most recent tax return showing their adjusted gross income and dependents. However, we didn't anticipate that many older adults/seniors who receive on Social Security do not file taxes. We adjusted the process by creating a "stated income" form for those who don't file taxes to complete and have notarized.

While homeowners could easily prove six years of residency through annual city property tax records, it wasn't as straightforward for renters who don't pay an annual housing property tax. We allowed renters to submit alternative documentation to prove the number of years they've lived in the footprint, such as court documents and shipping receipts.

Residents enrolled in need-based programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) may lose those benefits if their assets exceed a specific amount. (Note that asset limits vary from state to state.) Therefore, resident investors receiving certain public benefits could not use all the wealth-building strategies in our initiative. Two resident investors were able to use their funds to make home repairs since the contractors were paid on their behalf, while we worked with two other resident investors to set up **special needs trusts** to hold and invest their funds. Consult your state's need-based programs office when planning your project to make sure all residents who qualify can use the funding you provide.

12. Recruit Financial Planners

Identify and recruit financial planners to advise resident investors on wealth-building and asset management strategies. You can start this process by determining how many financial planners you need to recruit, identifying the desired mindset and values planners need to have to serve the resident investors with care, outlining your expectations for their participation, and identifying the financial firms in your area. Support from financial planners ensures that all resident investors receive professional advice on wealth building, which typically comes at a cost.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

In order to make sure our initiative's funding contributed to comprehensive, multi-generational wealth building, we recognized that the resident investors, like all of us, would benefit from additional education and support systems. Individuals with wealth typically don't maintain and grow their wealth by themselves. Instead, they often rely on guidance from financial experts.

We used the following documents:

Sample Volunteer Agreement Disclaimer

Sample Pro Bono Financial Planning Engagement Letter

We recruited volunteer financial planners by networking, making cold calls, and using platforms like the Foundation for Financial Planning's website, **Pro Bono Planner Match**. We asked each financial planner to work with two resident investors.

We adapted the **Foundation for Financial Planning's volunteer agreements** to clearly outline the anticipated time commitments and responsibilities for financial planners, guarantee the work would be performed on a pro bono basis, and ensure that all engagement would be in compliance with the Certified Financial Planner Board's Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

One resident investor noted that our selection of financial planners felt intentional, emphasizing the importance of trust and care in these relationships. Resident investors formed meaningful connections throughout the process, which is pivotal for long-term success while building their financial futures.

> **As financial planners, our initial quest is to help a prospect find value in what we're about to do in establishing this relationship. But when you have a program like the *Rooted* Project, it's a win-win because you have an organization that is backing you, that understands your value. Then you have participants who take the initiative to apply that means they understand the value. When you're working with someone that understands the value of what you're going to bring, what this relationship could provide, then it's just, it's a win-win situation.**
>
> - Christopher

LESSONS LEARNED

Several of the financial planners we initially recruited to volunteer were ultimately unable to participate due to unforeseen circumstances. We recommend recruiting more financial planners than needed to account for this possibility.

Recruiting financial planners from smaller firms was less complex, as their firm's approval process was more straightforward. Larger corporate firms often require navigating multiple layers of approval.

The financial planning sector lacks diversity, which may make it challenging to recruit planners who share a similar demographic background with your participants. We suggest starting recruitment efforts early. We engaged in cold calling to recruit a diverse group of financial planners, and most were receptive.

13. Identify Partners + Volunteers to Advise Resident Investors

Reflect on what you heard from community members and partners to identify what additional support the resident investors may need in order to build wealth. You can partner with local organizations and individuals committed to the community to provide comprehensive support beyond your organization's scope.

Collaborating with recognized entities enhances community trust and project effectiveness. Try to seek partners eager to invest in people and open to exploring impacts beyond traditional measures. A curious, open-minded approach will help navigate the new terrain of wealth-building interventions.

Ask yourself:

- What additional support will resident investors need in order to get the best outcomes from their funds?
- What expertise exists within your organization to support resident investors? What expertise do you need to seek from external sources?
- What other organizations are trusted by the community you are working with? Could you partner with them?
- Where do you already have relationships with other organizations? Where do you need to build new relationships?
- How can you balance between providing support for resident investors and being overly burdensome for them?
- How can you ensure that all supports are a value add?

Partnerships with other organizations can be complex. To clarify roles and responsibilities, establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with external partners.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Our organization had neither the expertise nor the staff capacity required to support the resident investors in all the investment areas. We connected with other organizations that had the appropriate expertise and explored partnerships. We prioritized organizations that were respected by the community or had previous ties to the community. Some organizations were willing to provide support to our resident investors at no cost because our work aligned with their existing efforts, while others agreed to work with our resident investors if we could cover the cost of services.

Before launching our initiative, community members expressed the need for assistance in navigating home repairs or opening a business if they were selected to participate in the initiative. In response, we formed partnerships with other organizations to assist in navigating the home repair process and starting a business.

We ensured participants had access to the following support at no cost to them:

Home Repair

We partnered with **Park Central Development**, a local Community Development Corporation, to help resident investors navigate the home repair process. They helped homeowners define the scope of the repairs, find contractors, and manage contractors to ensure the work was completed properly.

Small Business Support

Starting a business can be risky, but with proper support and mentorship, the likelihood of success is high. We partnered with the **Small Business Empowerment Center** (SBEC), which provided a curriculum and a six-month mentorship program for resident investors starting businesses. SBEC also provided assistance to those who were scaling up existing businesses by reviewing their business plans and advising on additional ways to support business growth.

Estate Planners

Estate planners played a significant role in helping resident investors protect their assets. Some services were delivered through workshops, while others required individual attention. We collaborated with a lawyer to develop a **Beneficiary Deed Template** for resident investors who owned real estate. We held a workshop to assist resident investors in completing, notarizing, and filing the form with the Recorder of Deeds. **Legal Services of Eastern Missouri**, a nonprofit legal firm, provided personalized assistance to resident investors needing more in-depth estate planning services.

Credit Counseling

Building wealth requires increasing assets and reducing debt. We partnered with **Prosperity Connection**, a local nonprofit, to help resident investors review their credit reports and understand their debt. They provided free credit reports and reviews, and resident investors could request additional credit counseling as needed.

Legal Services

Securing legal support was needed in both the planning and implementation phases of the initiative.

During the planning phase, we received pro bono legal services to create a **Participation Agreement** that outlined the roles and responsibilities of our organization and the resident investors. Our legal partner also reviewed the financial planner agreement templates adapted from the Foundation for Financial Planning as mentioned in the **Recruit Financial Planners section** on pg. 30.

During the implementation phase, we also used legal services to help resident investors set up their businesses or navigate business agreements. This included setting up a Special Needs Trust for two resident investors who needed to maintain eligibility for SSI benefits while using their *Rooted* funds for asset building.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is imperative to start identifying and reaching out to potential partners early on because establishing some partnerships took longer than anticipated.

Finding pro bono legal services to review and prepare legal agreements also took considerable time. Many firms have pro bono departments, but their approval processes can be lengthy. Start early to prevent delays.

Ensure that the agreement between your organization and resident investors includes termination language and process, detailing the circumstances that might require removing a resident investor from the project. We encountered an issue that broke the agreement and required removing a resident investor from the initiative. Although our agreement stated the requirements of participating in the initiative, we realized we didn't outline our process for termination. We decided to create a termination letter that included an option for appealing our decision.

14. Design the Application Process

Design a user-friendly, accessible application process that ensures people can easily apply for your project. Consider whether applications will be available online, in person, in printed form, or a combination, and what information applicants will need to provide.

Be sure to offer clear instructions and guidance to help applicants understand the process and complete their applications accurately. An overly complex application can create a barrier for potential applicants, so keep the application as simple as possible while still gathering the information you need to determine eligibility.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We implemented a two-step online application process: an eligibility quiz followed by the complete application. The quiz served as a pre-screening tool to weed out ineligible applicants, saving time for both the applicants and our team.

***Rooted* eligibility quiz questions:**

- What is your address?
- Does your household identify as Black?
- In what year were you born?
- How long have you lived in the West End or Visitation Park?
- How many adults and children live in your household? *(This helped us determine if they met the area median income requirements.)*
- What is your household income?

If applicants passed the eligibility quiz, they moved on to the complete online application. Applicants were asked to upload documents to verify each eligibility criteria—age, length of residency, and income.

We accepted the following documents for each criteria:

REQUIREMENT FOR ELIGIBILITY	VERIFYING DOCUMENTS
25 years of age or older	One of the following: state ID, driver's license, passport, or birth certificate.
Resident of the neighborhood for at least six years	Any combination of the following documents that show household address dating back six years: Lease, property tax receipt, utility bill, insurance receipts (homeowners, renters, or auto), bank statements, vehicle registration card, property deed, tax return, or W-2s.
10 to 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI)	One of the following: Previous year's household tax return, W-2s from the previous year for all adults in the household, last two months of paystubs for all adults in the household, or a social security statement.

The application included additional questions to help plan the initiative, such as how applicants might use the $22,000 and their availability for future meetings. These extra questions were for informational purposes only and did not affect eligibility.

For applicants with technological challenges, we offered in-office assistance to complete the online application.

LESSONS LEARNED

When selecting a platform for an online application, make sure you fully understand the platform's capabilities and limitations. We used Survey Monkey's Apply platform. It met most of our needs, but some functions were not available. For example, their data system used zip code-level data and could not verify neighborhood-level addresses. We contracted with a tech consultant to create and add code to the Apply platform. It was an added expense, although not too costly.

We designed our two-step process to include the eligibility quiz as a quick pre-screening tool so that ineligible applicants didn't invest a lot of time completing an application. However, some eligible applicants were confused by the two-step process and completed the eligibility quiz but didn't end up completing the second portion of the application. It's important that your project's application directions are clear so applicants can understand the process and complete the full application.

The eligibility quiz collected applicants' email addresses, but we did not ask for phone numbers until the complete application. This presented a problem when trying to contact those eligible applicants who failed to submit the complete application.

15. Determine Fund Disbursement

During the planning phase, you will create a strategy for disbursing funds that aligns with the community's needs and your organization's parameters and values. This alignment ensures that fund distribution is effective and respectful of resident investors' circumstances.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Our planning committee considered our guiding principles and overarching goals when discussing how to disburse funds. Although we wanted to disburse funds directly to resident investors, this wasn't feasible due to potential tax implications and risks to resident investors that receive public benefits. Instead, we opted to handle fund allocation on resident investors' behalf.

We used flexible prepaid debit cards for the $2,000 disbursement so resident investors could use the funds in various ways to meet their immediate needs, including paying off credit card debt, covering rent, or building an emergency savings account.

The card's administrative platform allowed us to see how the funds were spent (with resident investors' consent) so we could collect data for our study.

For the fund disbursement, we tailored the distribution method based on the investment options chosen by each resident investor:

Purchasing property
Funds were disbursed directly to the title company via check upon the closing of the property.

Renovating property
Our partner, Park Central Development, oversaw the home repair process for resident investors. They made payments directly to the contractors selected and approved by the resident investors.

Starting or expanding a small business
Resident investors received their funds after completing a six-month mentorship with the Small Business Empowerment Center. They provided a budget for the disbursement schedule. Once approved, their funds were deposited directly into their business bank accounts.

Investment account
We transferred funds through Automated Clearing House (ACH) to the resident investors' investment accounts.

LESSONS LEARNED

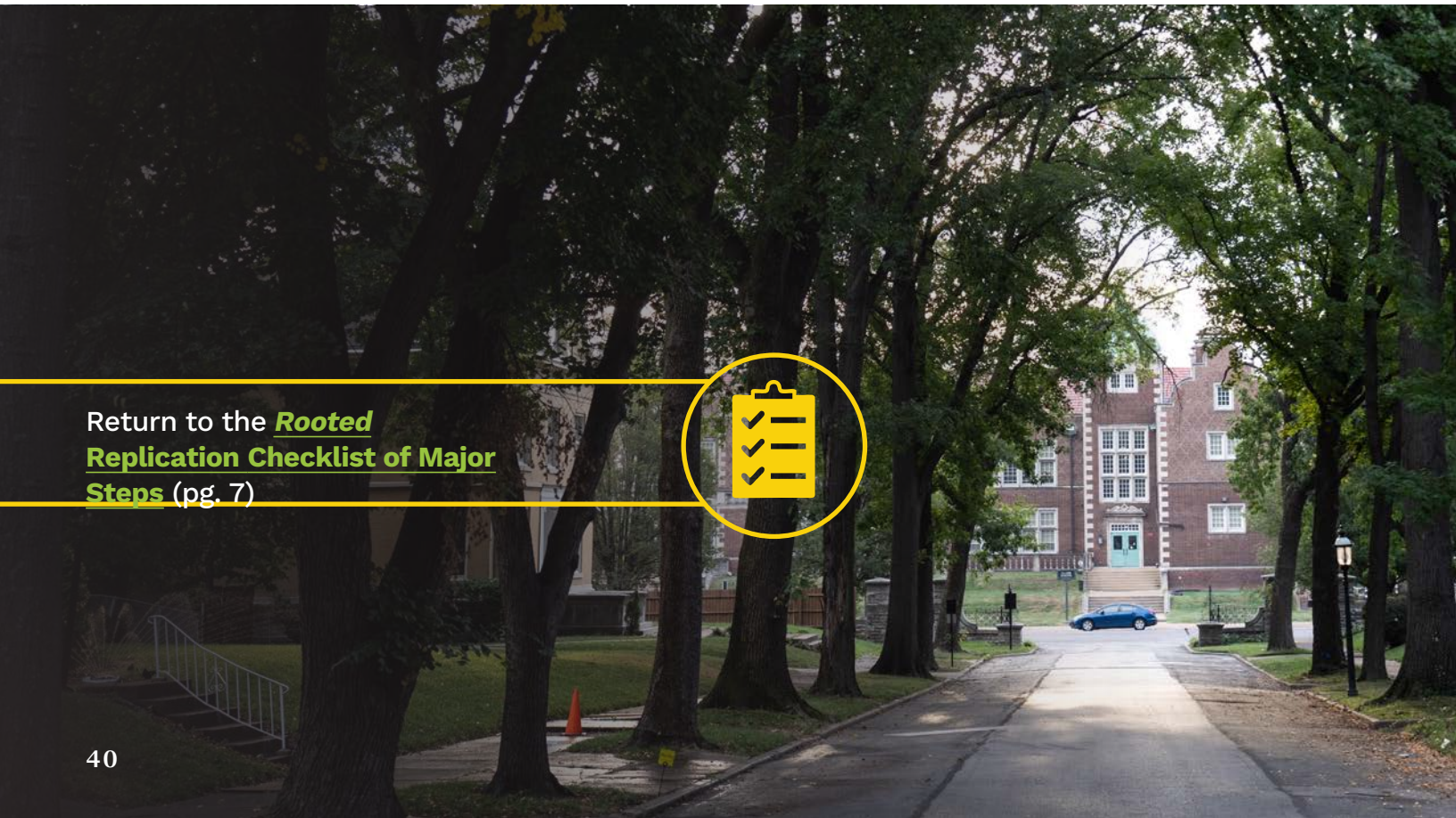
Some resident investors were confused about the fund disbursement process. Although this information was communicated during a presentation and in handouts, it wasn't fully understood. To help alleviate any confusion, consider multiple ways to communicate this information, including one-on-one check-ins.

16. Determine Project Evaluation Needs

Project evaluation is critical. It can show the effectiveness of your project, discern opportunities for improvement, and identify key learnings. You can refer to the project goals you defined when you created the project framework to determine what you want to learn from your initiative. You might plan a straightforward evaluation to assess how well the project worked and benefited resident investors or you may pursue a more rigorous study, depending on your values, goals, and capacity.

Finding an evaluation partner who understands various evaluative and study structures is essential. They can help you determine the best approach for evaluating your project. Engage this partner early in the planning phase to ensure they can offer meaningful guidance and help you understand their responsibilities and associated costs. While the evaluation partner will handle most of the evaluation work, you might need to help connect them with applicants and resident investors.

When working in communities extensively studied or harmed by previous research, approach evaluation efforts with sensitivity. Explain the study clearly and transparently, articulating the value, using accessible language, and ensuring participants understand their right to opt out. Choose a research partner with a positive reputation and a respectful relationship with the community. With the right partner, this process can strengthen trust and foster positive engagement.



Return to the ***Rooted*** **Replication Checklist of Major Steps** (pg. 7)

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

As a pilot, it was important to evaluate the *Rooted* initiative's effectiveness and impact on resident investors and the neighborhood. We chose to collaborate with researchers from the **Urban Institute**, a social and economic policy research organization, to conduct a study over the initiative's initial three years.

We decided our study would compare two groups: our "resident investors" and our "survey group." The first group was defined as our "resident investors" (commonly called the experimental group), and these 50 individuals would receive the $22,000 investment. The second group was our "survey group" (commonly called a control group), which consisted of eligible applicants who did not receive the investment.

We decided to select people for each group through random selection. The Urban Institute researchers used the two groups for comparative analysis throughout the length of the initiative to determine how the funding impacted resident investors' ability to build wealth. We expected some applicants in the survey group to drop out of the study over time. Our research partners predicted a potential dropout rate of up to 25%.

We also worked with the Urban Institute researchers to create metrics and determine what methods we would use throughout the three-year study, including a baseline survey, an annual survey, focus groups, and neighborhood-level data.

LESSONS LEARNED

Halfway through the initiative, the Urban Institute researchers conducted a site visit and a data walk with resident investors and our partners. They learned new information about the neighborhood and the community members. They noted that had they conducted the site visit earlier, potentially during our planning phase, they may have designed the study differently. Consider involving your research partner in this component of the work sooner.

Recruitment + Selection

2

ESTIMATED TIMEFRAME
4-6 months

ESTIMATED STAFF TIME
2 full-time people

STAFF PROFICIENCIES
Community engagement, marketing, design, survey administration, project management

The Recruitment + Selection phase ensures that your *Rooted* replication project reaches its intended audience in a productive manner. Effective communication strategies help share important information about your project with community members, build confidence in your project, and ensure your message resonates with the community. Well-executed outreach increases the likelihood that you receive qualified applicants.

1. Create an Outreach + Communications Plan

Develop a comprehensive, multi-method outreach plan to reach each household in your community in ways that are accessible for them. You can use in-person methods (e.g., information sessions, canvassing, office hours, etc.), print materials, online, social media, and local media exposure to maximize your reach.

When designing your outreach strategy, consider the diversity of your audience and the platforms and outlets they use most, and tailor your methods accordingly. Approach your outreach plan with flexibility, especially regarding the timeframe and messaging. As you engage in outreach, you'll quickly learn which methods work best in the community of focus, and you may decide to make changes to your plan.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We used community-focused, place-based outreach methods like yard signs, direct mail postcards, door-to-door canvassing, tabling at apartment buildings, in-person office hours, and attending community events.

Personal interactions—such as office hours, info sessions, and canvassing—were particularly influential in recruiting applicants. These activities allowed us to capture attention, explain the initiative, and build awareness within the community. Some residents were curious but hesitant to engage. We leveraged our relationships with the neighborhood community development corporation and resident organizations to build trust with residents. We also made ourselves available for repeat interactions with residents to foster these relationships.

We wanted our outreach to focus only on residents within the neighborhoods chosen for the *Rooted* initiative. To stay hyperlocal and avoid receiving applications from outside of our footprint, we decided against using social media or doing a big media/news push.

LESSONS LEARNED

We initially underestimated how long outreach would take. We planned to conduct outreach for six weeks; however, at the end of that period, we realized we didn't have enough applicants. We decided to extend the application deadline to allow for more time to engage in outreach.

2. Tailor Messaging

Provide outreach materials that are easy to understand. Try to avoid jargon or complex language, and always explain concepts or acronyms that might not be immediately clear. Accessible language ensures that everyone, regardless of their background, can understand and engage with your materials. Consider hosting a community focus group to learn more about how people will interpret the project, your messaging, and its impact on their community.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We held a community focus group to determine the best way to communicate about the initiative and what messages would most resonate.

Questions we asked the community focus group:

- What are the existing values within the community? What are residents' common goals?
- What are the current barriers to applying for or participating in the initiative? How can we eliminate those barriers?
- What are we asking people to do?
- How could *Rooted* benefit the community?

We also discussed what stories might inspire residents to participate.

To create a visual message about *Rooted*, we created a *Rooted* logo that had a similar look and feel to the Invest STL logo to co-brand the initiative. We used the logo on all our public materials to build recognition in and trust among the community and establish *Rooted* as an initiative of Invest STL.

LESSONS LEARNED

Engaging with key community members and leaders at the beginning of our planning phase provided critical insights that shaped our messaging and outreach strategies. We heard how people felt about the initiative, their hesitations, and how they thought the larger community may respond. This informed our messaging and outreach.

Listen to the feedback you receive from the community. For example, during our focus group, residents expressed distrust for the word "lottery" because people often suspect lotteries are unfair. Instead, we used the term "random selection" during our outreach to more positively resonate with the community.

We also heard that people may not trust the selection process if the neighborhood's most active residents were selected. So, we opted for a public selection process to maintain transparency and demonstrate credibility.

We created strong brand recognition for the *Rooted* initiative; however, that caused some confusion between the initiative and our work as **Invest STL**, a nonprofit that invests in people-centered, place-based community development to enhance neighborhoods and reduce inequity in St. Louis. Make sure to balance and co-brand your project with the affiliated organization to avoid confusion within the community.

3. Create Your Visual Brand + Materials

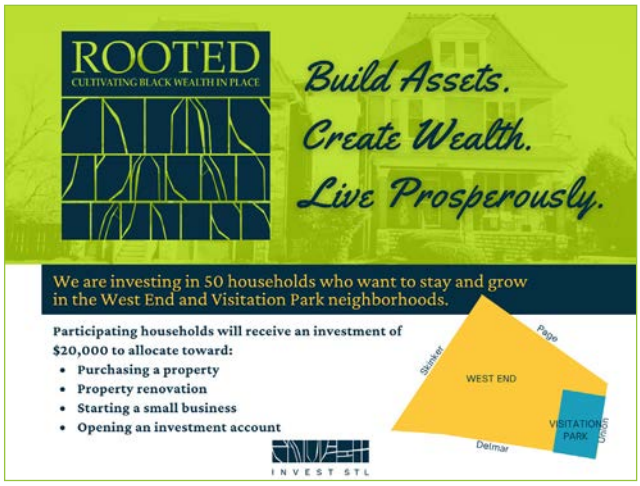
Develop a consistent visual identity for your project to increase its recognizability and legitimacy in the eyes of the community. When people repeatedly see the same branding, it becomes familiar. Consider branding all your materials, such as yard signs, mailers, and your web presence, to be easily recognizable.

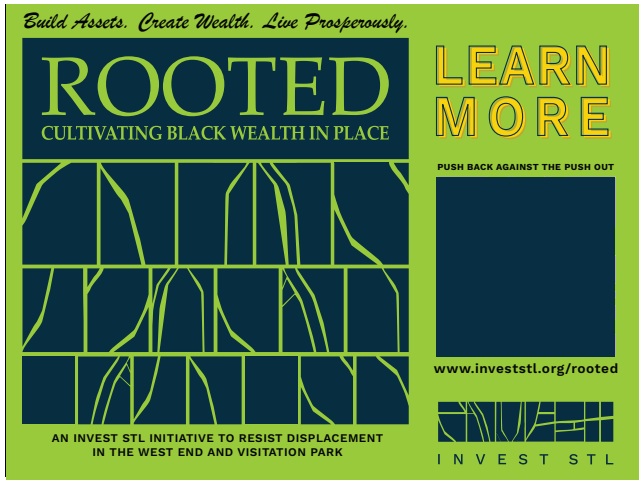
You will likely want to name your project, create and use specific colors to reinforce your brand, or develop a separate logo for your project. If your organization has an existing relationship with the focus community, align the project's branding with your organization's branding to leverage your organizational reputation to encourage residents to explore the opportunity.

Use high-resolution images of individuals or places that resonate with the intended community in your branding and outreach materials. You want the community you're working with to be able to see themselves and their place in your project.

When you produce the necessary materials (e.g., yard signs, postcards, flyers, etc.) required for your outreach strategy, make sure they include:

- **An explanation of your project**
- **A description of how people will benefit from your project**
- **Important dates (e.g., application deadlines and/or dates for info sessions)**
- **A map of the focus area for your project (if your project has eligibility based on a geographic area)**
- **Information on how to learn more, get involved, or apply**

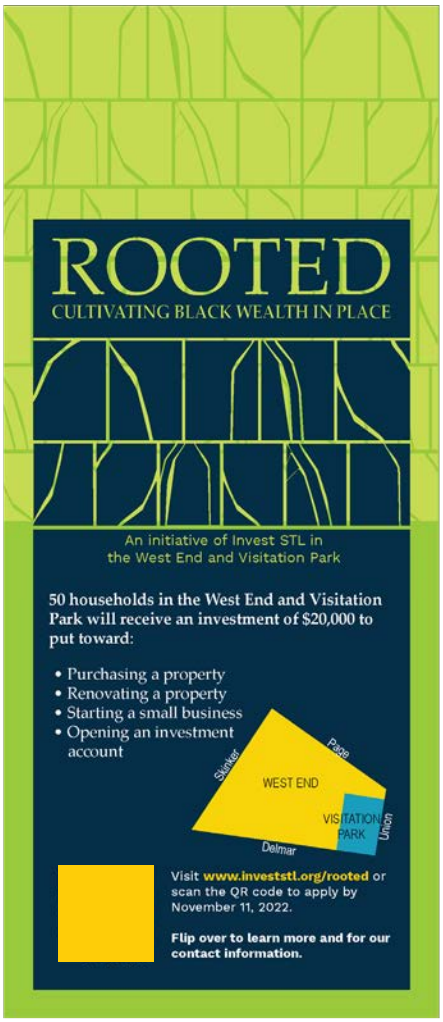




Keep in mind that your brand goes beyond a logo. Your team's interactions with people, its community presence, and even your office space/location can represent your brand.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

The West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods were experiencing a lot of market speculation with outside investors trying to purchase property at below market rates. To distinguish ourselves from outside investors, our messaging was clear that *Rooted* was not trying to buy homes or sell a product. Instead, we focused our messaging on supporting and benefiting the existing community.



We used Canva, a free-to-use online graphic design tool, to create our outreach materials. All outreach materials included the *Rooted* initiative logo and colors to reinforce the brand and increase community recall. We also incorporated community members' feedback on our messaging to make sure it resonated with our audience.

Using consistent branding (including a cohesive color scheme and consistent typography) was very effective. By the time we began door-to-door outreach, many residents were already aware of the initiative from seeing yard signs and postcards.

We wore Invest STL t-shirts while conducting outreach to further solidify our brand in the community. As we were canvassing, occasionally we'd have someone driving or walking by stop to ask us about *Rooted* because they recognized the brand on our shirts.

4. Spread the Word

Spread the word about your project by putting your outreach plan into action. Consider timing your different outreach methods intentionally so they build on each other and pique the community's interest.

The goal is to build anticipation, recall, and familiarity within the community by ensuring that each contact point is recognizable and consistent. Building on outreach efforts gives people multiple chances to view, interact with, and increase their comfort with your initiative and to consider applying.

Find the right balance between providing too much information and not enough. Potential applicants should have all the details they need to understand your project, determine their eligibility, navigate the application process, and know whom to contact with questions—without feeling overwhelmed.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

The team enacted a layered approach to build anticipation and familiarity within the community.

OUR OUTREACH TIMELINE

Two weeks before the "launch date":

- We published a website that included more in-depth information about the initiative that couldn't fit onto our print outreach materials. The site included additional background on the initiative as well as frequently asked questions. It also featured a **video** we created that explained the initiative and our intention behind it.
- We placed 50 Rooted yard signs around the neighborhood with a call to action for community members to scan a QR code to "Learn More" at the top. The idea, suggested by a community member, was designed to build some anticipation about the initiative prior to fully launching the initiative and to build brand recognition.

Launch Date:

The day the application went live, we sent out a postcard to every household in the footprint. The postcard included an explanation of the initiative, a list of eligibility requirements, and the link to apply.

After the launch date to four weeks later:

- Elected officials and community groups shared our information about the initiative within their networks.
- We attended community meetings hosted by the two neighborhood organizations and the neighborhood's Community Development Corporation to speak about the initiative.
- We placed flyers in local businesses.

Three days after the launch date to six weeks later:

We conducted door-to-door outreach with our entire Invest STL team. We knocked on every door in the neighborhood over a six-week period. If residents weren't home when we stopped by, we left a door hanger with information on the initiative.

During our outreach period, people often called the office to get more information. We made sure all our team members knew the basic information to share with callers and had the frequently asked questions at their desks so they could address all basic questions.

LESSONS LEARNED

Some residents reported that they read the first mailer but thought the initiative was a scam. However, after seeing yard signs and door hangers about the initiative, they believed *Rooted* was legitimate and felt encouraged to learn more. This reinforced the importance of a layered and ongoing outreach period to build familiarity, trust, and recall.

As the outreach progressed, we noticed that people still had questions about the initiative. So, we started hosting weekly info sessions at our office and updated our flyers with the dates and times of these sessions. These sessions offered deeper engagement and allowed community members to have their questions answered, better understand our organization and our intentions, and become comfortable with pursuing the opportunity.

During the door-to-door outreach, the team quickly realized they needed to adjust their script. Many residents initially assumed we were developers trying to buy their property, so the team emphasized that they had a $1 million grant to help build wealth in the neighborhood. The term "grant" resonated with people and made it clear we were offering them something.

It was difficult to conduct door-to-door outreach within large apartment buildings that had secured entrances. We found that property managers for market-rate apartment buildings would not allow us access inside. However, property managers at subsidized or below-market-rate apartment buildings were more receptive to allowing us in the building. They let us set up a table in the lobby or attend a building meeting or gathering in order to let tenants know about our initiative.

5. Begin Application + Monitoring Process

Your print materials should direct applicants to an easy-to-access application and its instructions by displaying the web address and a QR code. Provide your contact information in case applicants have questions or need in-person assistance with the application.

Monitor the online application periodically to check that people are completing it properly. If a certain prompt is often completed incorrectly, the instructions may not be clear. Make adjustments accordingly and provide potential applicants with additional guidance.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

The *Rooted* online application was easy to find on our website and promoted on all print materials. We held "office hours" so applicants could stop by our office to receive help completing an application. We also created a step-by-step video that walked people through the steps for filling out an application.

We initially planned to open our application for six weeks; but after six weeks, we had not received enough applications and realized we needed to do more outreach. We sent a second mailer that informed residents we had extended the application deadline, and we continued our outreach efforts.

During the application process, we monitored who was applying. This helped determine if there were any gaps in our applicant pool and informed our outreach next steps. For example, if more homeowners than renters were applying, we could conduct additional outreach at apartment buildings in the focus area.

LESSONS LEARNED

Many applicants submitted incorrect or incomplete documents. We spent a lot of time following up via phone, text, and email to assist people in accurately completing their applications. Account for this time and follow up.

Our application required residents to verify their email address in order to set up an application profile. A few applicants didn't have email accounts, so we had to create an email address for them to enable them to apply. We kept track of these applicants because we knew they weren't accustomed to checking emails and would likely be easier to reach via phone call. Consider having a different form of verification (i.e., phone number) to ensure accessibility.

Assign one team member the role of reviewing all applications for eligibility to maintain consistency in the reviewing process.

6. Host Pre-Selection Meetings

Pre-selection meetings provide an opportunity for all eligible applicants to actively understand the process, expectations, and other requirements. If your project involves a study or evaluation component, these meetings also allow applicants to opt in to being part of the project and any related studies or evaluation processes.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Following the application process, we required all eligible applicants to attend a pre-selection meeting. These meetings were necessary before the random selection process so applicants who did not receive funds could choose to participate in the study as part of the survey group to help evaluate the initiative's impact.

Since we conducted a full-scale evaluation of our initiative, applicants needed to understand the evaluation process, sign paperwork for the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and complete the opt-in survey that served as our baseline survey. If you are working with a research/study partner, their IRB is responsible for protecting those who participate in the study/evaluation. The IRB requires that people who participate in the study are fully informed of all aspects of the study and understand potential risks before consenting to participate. Therefore, it was important that we held meetings to fully explain the initiative and related study.

We structured these sessions for small groups of eight participants based on the number of electronic devices our office had available for completing the opt-in survey. To accommodate all 175 eligible applicants, we hosted 22 pre-selection meetings. During the sessions, applicants had a chance to consent to participating and take the baseline survey for the study. We made sure applicants understood they could opt out of the study and still be eligible to participate in the *Rooted* initiative.

During the pre-selection meetings, we provided each applicant with a unique numerical ID to use to complete their baseline survey. We also used these IDs during the random selection process to ensure it was unbiased.

Given that community members might have negative feelings about evaluations or studies, we were transparent about the evaluation process and reiterated that applicants had the right to choose whether or not they would participate. Key points that resonated with applicants included:

- **Highlighting the project as a new and innovative concept**
- **Sharing the goal of proving the project's success to encourage similar initiatives in the future**
- **Explaining the importance of the opportunity for the neighborhoods and the city**
- **Outlining the data to be collected and how we planned to use it**
- **Sharing details about the IRB and its role in protecting people during studies**
- **Introducing the third-party evaluator to ensure impartiality and anonymity**

7. Select Participants

After reviewing all applications and completing opt-in forms (if you held pre-selection meetings), the next step is to select your participants. Depending on your project's goals, you may use random selection, choose a representative sample, or use specific eligibility criteria (such as balancing the number of renters and homeowners).

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We selected eligible participants randomly because it was the surest way to eliminate bias in the process. Since we aimed to include resident investors from low-to-middle-income brackets in our initiative, we calculated the median income of all applicants and then randomly selected 25 applicants from the lower-income bracket and 25 from the middle-income bracket.

To ensure transparency and to continue fostering community trust, we conducted the random selection during a live virtual event open to all applicants. We began with a demonstration round to show attendees how the selection process would work and to confirm it would produce randomized results.

Our third-party evaluation partner led and facilitated the process. Using an external evaluation partner to select the resident investors helped eliminate concerns about potential favoritism, as the partner had no prior relationship with the participants.

Using the randomization feature in Microsoft Excel to assign random sequential numbers to each applicant ID, we selected the first 25 numbers from each income bracket. The selected IDs appeared on the screen for all attendees to see. During the event, 50 applicants were selected for the resident investor group, while the remaining 125 were automatically selected for the survey/control group.

Using participant IDs instead of names during the random selection protected applicants' privacy, addressing concerns that some may not want their neighbors to know whether they applied or were selected.

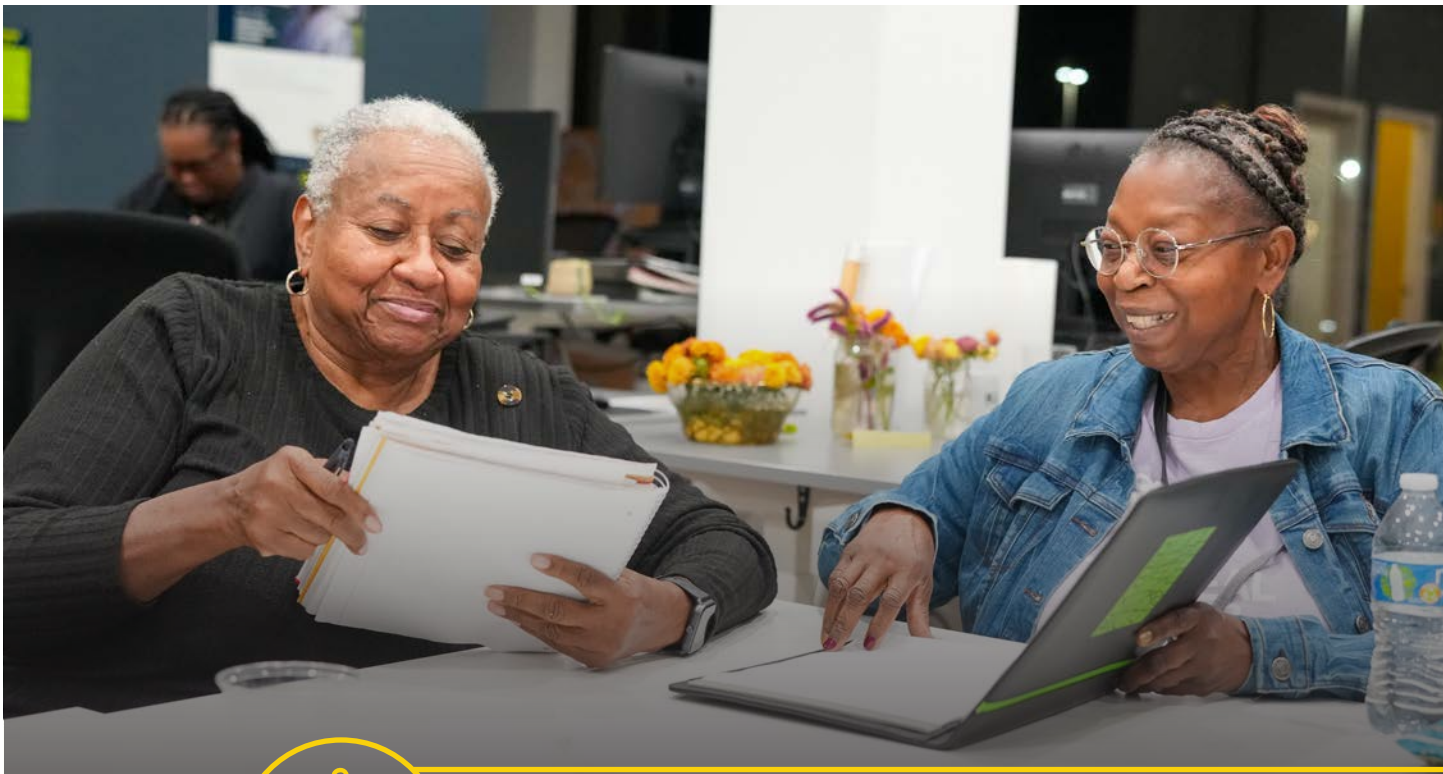
> **"I was at work, sneaking to watch, taking screenshots... then I saw my number (which I'd memorized). I didn't believe my eyes, so I dug in my purse for the paper with my number. I still didn't fully believe until I got this call."**
>
> - Resident Investor

Seventy-seven viewers attended the online event and observed the selection process live. The virtual meeting was recorded and available for viewing after the live event. We also shared the link with all applicants after the event. After the event, we contacted all applicants directly to inform them of whether they were selected or not. When we called them, we realized most had already either attended the webinar or watched the recording. Although some people were disappointed, they accepted the outcome and appreciated the process' fairness.

Watch our virtual random selection process here.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the pre-selection meetings, we gave all applicants their applicant ID, which would be used during the random selection. However, some people had misplaced their applicant ID by the time the random selection was held. Consider sending an email or text message to each applicant to reshare their applicant ID so they have it handy on the day of the random selection.



Return to the ***Rooted* Replication Checklist of Major Steps** (pg. 7)

3

Implementation

ESTIMATED TIMEFRAME:
6 months - 1 year+

ESTIMATED STAFF TIME:
1 full-time + 1 part-time person

STAFF PROFICIENCIES:
Project management, facilitation, relationship building, budget tracking

With resident investors selected, it's time to put your plans into action. You will see your groundwork take shape and your project's real impact emerge during this phase. Over the next six months to a year-plus, guide resident investors through structured activities and introduce support systems designed to help them stay in their neighborhood, begin to build wealth, and achieve their financial goals.

1. Onboard Financial Planners

Host an onboarding session for financial planners that includes an overview of the project, their roles and responsibilities as volunteers, and a briefing on the focus neighborhood. The onboarding should be hosted in the community to ground the financial planners in the community, and a community member should provide the presentation portion on the focus neighborhood. Allow space to discuss your expectations for how resident investors are treated and respected.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We onboarded the financial planners a few months prior to onboarding the resident investors. The onboarding included a detailed introduction to the *Rooted* initiative, an outline of their role and expected time commitment, guidance on the financial planner-resident investor relationship, and space to address any concerns. A community member whose family had lived in the neighborhood for several generations presented information on the neighborhood's history and current developments to familiarize the financial planners with the neighborhood.

Knowing that most financial planners advise individuals with higher net worth rather than clients with low-to-moderate incomes, we underscored our expectation that resident investors be treated with care and dignity just as we did when initially recruiting the financial planners. We emphasized the importance of listening, not making assumptions, understanding the vulnerability a resident investor may feel sharing their financial information, and honoring appointments. Although the financial planners who chose to volunteer with our initiative were already well-aligned with our mission and expectations, we knew that taking extra care in this area was important.

LESSONS LEARNED

When financial planners began working with the resident investors, many still had questions about their role. For example, some financial planners thought they were supposed to help resident investors work through their property repairs. We wanted to provide financial planners with ongoing support and a space to ask questions, so we set up an optional financial planner check-in virtual meeting that the financial planners could join if they needed assistance or had questions or concerns.

View the following document:

Financial Planner Guidebook

2. Onboard Resident Investors

Onboarding resident investors signals the beginning of your project's implementation. A clear and thoughtful onboarding process will help create a more positive experience for all involved and prevent misunderstandings and frustrations in the future. Resident investors need to understand the full depth of the project and the requirements of all entities involved. Onboarding in a group setting builds camaraderie, creates connection, and allows the resident investors to see the project's broader impact on their community.

The onboarding should cover project details, required educational sessions on using their funds, and introductions to project partners who will provide additional services and support. When planning onboarding meetings, consider how you want resident investors to feel as they progress through your project (e.g., excited, a sense of belonging, dignified, respected, supported, etc.). This should guide your choice of meeting spaces, catering, facilitation techniques, speakers, and materials.

Ensure your meeting agendas allow ample time for attendees to process and fully understand the material presented. Remember, people absorb information differently. You can provide materials beforehand to give resident investors extra time to digest the information. Record the meetings for those who can't attend or need additional clarity. Consider offering additional onboarding support sessions or other opportunities for resident investors to ask questions.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We wanted the resident investors to feel excited, trusted, and respected throughout the entire initiative, and we aimed to set that tone at all of our meetings and interactions. Each meeting was held at a beautiful art gallery with event space. We scheduled time for mingling at each meeting, provided excellent catered food that honored all resident investors' dietary restrictions, and offered childcare.

To ensure that resident investors understood all aspects of the *Rooted* initiative, our onboarding process included four mandatory sessions that were held every three weeks.

We offered daytime and evening sessions to accommodate different schedules. These sessions equipped *Rooted* resident investors with the tools they needed for success without overwhelming them.

We encouraged resident investors to include their family in the process by bringing their spouse, children, or siblings with them. We aimed to share financial knowledge within families and across multiple generations.

To reinforce meeting attendance, we published all meeting times and locations upfront and sent email and text reminders beforehand.

The four mandatory meetings included the following:

Session 1

- Walkthrough of the *Rooted* initiative details and parameters
- Explanation of supports we provided, including introductions to program partners
- Schedule of upcoming meetings and milestones
- Share Participant Guidebook

Session 2

- Panel presentation on the benefits of financial planning
- Introduction to their assigned financial planner

Session 3

- Detailed overview of the four wealth-building strategies participants can select (purchasing property, renovating property, starting or growing a business, or opening an investment account)
- Presentations by experts in each strategy

Session 4

- Overview of the importance of managing and protecting assets
- Presentation by community members on current neighborhood developments and community-building efforts

LESSONS LEARNED

Despite attending the mandatory onboarding session, a few resident investors were still confused about how they could spend their funds and how to get their funds released. Consider having one-on-one meetings with each resident investor after the selection process. These meetings could focus on the basics of the initiative, getting to know the individual better in order to pair them with the most suitable financial planner, and identifying which resident investors receive public benefits that require additional navigation. This provides an opportunity to answer any questions while also reinforcing the trust built between your project and its participants.

As resident investors were onboarded, we received many questions about when they would receive their funds. Some resident investors expected funds to be released instantly, not understanding that there was an onboarding process. Manage resident investors' expectations during your outreach by setting a firm date on which funds will be released. Promoting this information during outreach and within the application process will help avoid confusion or frustration.

View the following document:

Participant Guidebook

3. Match Resident Investors with Financial Planners

Matching your resident investors with the right financial planner requires intentionality and a deep understanding of the financial planners' expertise and the resident investors' interests and needs. Setting your resident investors and financial planners up for a successful relationship is vital. Take the opportunity to learn about each resident investor's wishes and hesitations for interacting with the financial planner and each financial planner's ways of working and relating with their clients. Having these preferences documented through a tool such as a well-crafted questionnaire can provide both resident investors and financial planners the chance to reflect on what's important to them in a productive partnership and give you critical information to identify investor-planner pairings.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

During the first resident investor onboarding session, they completed a brief questionnaire to help inform the matchmaking process. Financial planners completed a similar questionnaire during their onboarding session. We matched resident investors with financial planners based on the investors' needs, the planners' expertise, and their availability for meetings. Here are the questions we asked both groups:

Questions we asked resident investors:

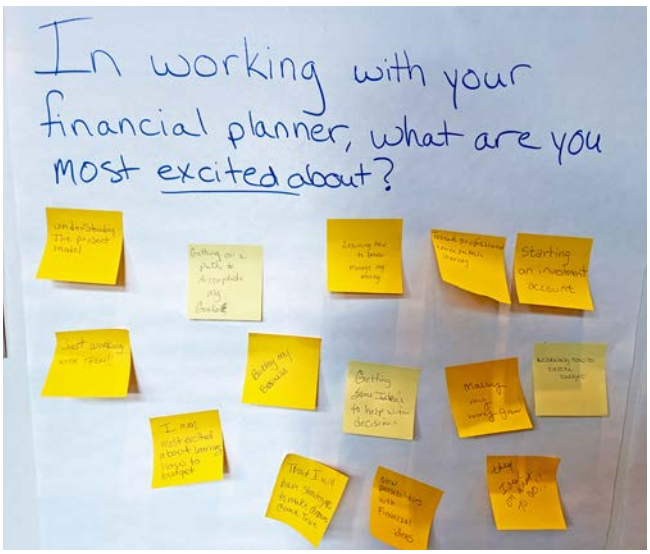
- Where would you prefer to meet with your financial planner? (Options: virtually, at the Invest STL office, the planner's office, or your home)
- Have you worked with a financial planner or advisor before? (Options: Yes/No)
- How comfortable are you with using a computer or completing tasks online? (Options: Good/Fair/Poor, but I have someone who helps me/Poor, or I prefer not to use a computer)
- Do you prefer your meetings with financial planners to be in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Or are you flexible?
- Are there specific financial topics you hope to address? (Examples: saving for a child's college, retirement planning, tax planning, etc.)
- Do you already have an estate plan? (Options: Yes/No)
- If you prefer to work with a financial planner of a specific background, gender, or race, please let us know. Note, we may not be able to accommodate all requests.

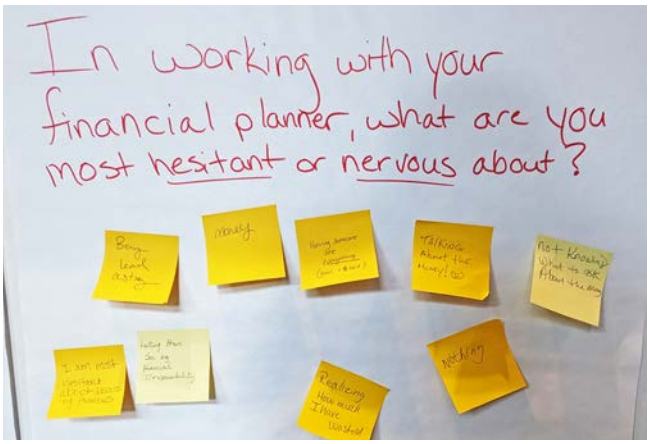
Questions we asked financial planners:

- **Where are you willing to meet resident investors? (Options: virtually, at the Invest STL office, your office, or the resident investors' home)**
- **Have you provided financial advice to populations with low incomes before? (Options: Yes/No)**
- **Do you prefer to work with resident investors electronically, or can you accommodate both electronic and physical methods (like paper?)**
- **Do you prefer your meetings with resident investors to be in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Or are you flexible?**
- **What are your areas of financial expertise or specialties?**
- **Do you help clients with estate planning? (Options: Yes/No)**
- **Is there anything else you'd like to share with us? Please include it below.**

Each financial planner was matched with two resident investors. Resident investors met their financial planners for the first time during our second resident investor onboarding session. To build rapport and trust, we provided time for them to chat and get to know each other. During this session, resident investors shared what excited them and what made them apprehensive about financial planning.

At the end of the meeting, the resident investors and financial planners scheduled one-on-one meetings to begin the financial planning process. These meetings would focus on resident investors' individual and household goals, current financial position, and ideal ways to achieve their personal financial objectives.





LESSONS LEARNED

While the questionnaire helped match resident investors with suitable financial planners, we learned relevant aspects of resident investors' lives later in the process after building stronger relationships with them. For example, we learned that one resident investor was considering divorce. Had we known about this earlier on, we could have matched this resident investor with a financial planner that has expertise in divorce planning, as one of our volunteer financial planners had experience in this area.

We didn't have the legal agreements for financial planners prepared when they first met with the resident investors. Therefore, getting the financial planners and resident investors to sign their mutual working agreement took extra effort and follow-up. Ensure all legal agreements and surveys are completed prior to the onboarding sessions, and have financial planners and resident investors sign the agreements during their group meeting. This will help minimize time spent tracking them down to complete required documents

See linked agreements in the **Recruit Financial Planners section** (pg. 30).

4. Initiate Financial Planning Sessions

Establish a level of consistency in the interactions between resident investors and their financial planner to ensure that a similar level of service is provided across all resident investor-financial planner pairs. You can share helpful guidance and structure for the financial planner-resident investor relationship while also encouraging each financial planner to customize their approach to match their resident investors' needs and preferences. Balancing standardized advice with individual support is essential for achieving a successful experience for resident investors and your overall project.

Steps to ensure consistency and personalization:

- Establish legal agreements to protect all parties from liability – **see examples on pg 30**.
- List key topics that all financial planners should cover with their resident investors, such as goals, income/expenditures, assets/debts, saving for retirement, and estate planning.
- Create standardized materials that resident investors can use with their financial planners.
- Decide if there will be a required frequency or minimum number of meetings before fund disbursement.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Resident investors completed **worksheets** before their first financial planning meeting about their goals, income, expenditures, assets, and debts. These worksheets helped to initiate discussions between resident investors and financial planners, ensure consistency across all relationships, and establish the basis of services being provided by financial planners. The resident investors and financial planners also discussed how to use the *Rooted* funds to best meet their financial goals.

For the remaining three years of the initiative, we required resident investors to meet with their financial planners at least twice a year to review progress and make adjustments. Resident investors could request additional appointments with their financial planners as needed.

We offered our office as a meeting location and created an easy scheduling system to make scheduling meetings more convenient. To ensure that all resident investors were receiving a similar level of service, we asked the financial planners to complete a brief, anonymous survey which provided us with data on meeting frequency and topics discussed.

LESSONS LEARNED

Most financial planners met regularly with their resident investors. But many planners appreciated our quarterly reminders to check in with their resident investors.

Resident investors sometimes felt uncomfortable reaching out to financial planners. To address this, have financial planners initiate contact and inform resident investors they can reach out to their planner as needed, especially when new circumstances arise.

> **"I learned how to invest money, develop a plan to work out my debt, and to problem solve in financial situations. What a great resource!"**
>
> - V. Smith

5. Provide Wealth-Building Wraparound Supports

The supports you provide to resident investors will depend on your project's structure and goals. Be mindful that resident investors might have needs beyond the project's scope. Familiarize yourself with other local projects and support services so you can provide comprehensive assistance throughout the process. It's essential to offer the right level of assistance to help participants build wealth while preserving their choice and autonomy.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We created a **Participant Guidebook** to provide information on how resident investors could use their funds, with specific sections dedicated to each wealth-building strategy. The guidebook was structured to offer support without overwhelming resident investors.

As noted earlier, we partnered with other organizations to provide services that were beyond our area of expertise. To support resident investors in the different areas of wealth building, we provided the following resources:

Support for purchasing property

- A list of active real estate agents in the neighborhood from our local real estate association
- Information on banks that have provided loans in the area to minimize appraisal gap issues
- Details on purchasing property from the city's land bank
- Other homebuying or down payment assistance projects available locally
- Workshops on home buying and property investing

Support for renovating property

- Guidance on navigating the home repair process through a contracted partner
- Recommendations on contractors
- Workshops on home maintenance
- Before starting any property renovations, we conducted a title search to:
  - Verify property ownership
  - Check for liens on the property that could lead to seizure of property *(If we found a lien, we worked with the resident investor to resolve it.)*
  - Identify if the property had an accompanying beneficiary deed *(If none existed, we encouraged the resident investor to create one by attending our Beneficiary Deed Workshop.)*

LESSONS LEARNED

The property renovation process takes considerable time, and working with contractors can be challenging. While having a liaison organization help manage the renovation process can be beneficial, adding another layer of complexity slowed down communication between the contractors and homeowners. To smooth out the process, consider setting communication expectations with any organizations that serve as a go-between for the contractors and homeowners.

Support for starting or growing a new business

- Mentorship through an organization that specializes in helping people start businesses
- Connections for networking with other businesses in their sector
- Promoting newly launched businesses within our network
- Information about small business grants and financing opportunities
- Details on events that feature small businesses

Support for opening an investment account

- Financial planners to assist in opening accounts and devising investment strategies
- Guidance to allow financial planners "view-only" access to monitor accounts, if desired
- Workshops on investment options and risk assessment

6. Allocate Resident Investor Funds

To effectively manage the allocation of resident investors' funds, track and document how each resident investor chooses to spend their funds. Working with their financial planner provides an opportunity for resident investors to gain insight and plan how an investment move may impact their wealth building in the context of their current financial picture.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

We developed **worksheets** for resident investors to fill out after they had met with their financial planner and finalized their decisions. Resident investors submitted their finalized investment worksheets to us, outlining their plans for using the $2,000 designated for paying down debt or addressing immediate needs and the $20,000 allocated for wealth building.

Once we received their investment worksheets, we followed up with each resident investor to discuss next steps. As noted on pg 39, each wealth-building strategy had different criteria for disbursement, so our conversation detailed the remaining actions that had to be taken before funds went out.

For example, those starting a business needed to complete their mentorship, receive their business license, and open a business bank account before their funds were transferred. After completing the necessary steps, we began the internal process of allocating their funds, which took up to two weeks based on our accounting procedures. We created internal forms to complete for disbursing funds, which allowed for easy tracking and follow-up.

LESSONS LEARNED

We didn't communicate a deadline for when residents should finalize spending decisions. Therefore, some resident investors took a long time to finalize their decisions (several went well into the first year and a half of the initiative). Disbursing funds at many different points in time made our accounting and tracking process more cumbersome. Establish a clear deadline for when resident investors should finalize spending decisions. This will motivate resident investors to meet with their financial planners and work through their plans. Having a deadline will also help with your organization's internal accounting processes.

We realized some resident investors were not immediately ready to spend their funds. For example, there was a resident investor who wanted to use their funds to purchase a home, but they needed time to build their credit score. We found that placing their funds into an investment account was a good intermediate step so they could continue to accrue interest while they were working on their credit.

7. Host Optional Workshops

Wealth-building education is often inaccessible for communities with fewer economic resources. Consider offering additional workshops to build financial knowledge that resident investors can share with their family and social networks.

Ask resident investors what topics interest them, and find knowledgeable, trusted presenters to cover those topics. Identify gaps in their understanding or struggles that may indicate a need for additional support or education. Allow time for resident investors to build relationships and learn together during these workshops.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

After onboarding, we surveyed resident investors to identify their interests. Then we offered optional workshops to complement resident investors' interests and chosen wealth-building strategies. We invited financial planners or experts to lead the workshops. The workshops covered various topics, including:

Homebuyers Workshop: Covered mortgage basics, FHA loan features and benefits, down payment assistance programs, and the home buying process

Real Estate Investing Workshop: Explored the essentials of investing in real estate across commercial, residential, or rental property, including considerations like cash flow and significant repairs

Stocks 101 Workshop: Introduced different types of stocks, dividends, and various investment strategies

Life Insurance Workshop: Provided an overview of life insurance from an impartial perspective, giving resident investors the ins and outs without a sales pitch

Education Planning Workshop: Discussed tools and strategies for saving for higher education

Tax Planning Workshop: Guided resident investors on how to plan for and prepare their taxes effectively

Socially-Responsible Investing Workshop: Explained the principles of socially-responsible investing and how to implement a strategy that aligns with your values

Retirement Planning Workshop: Offered strategies for managing income and expenses during retirement

Beneficiary Deeds Workshop: Outlined how to complete a beneficiary deed for their home using a provided **template**

Learning Investing Workshop: A four-part series that covered different types of investments, building a diverse portfolio, and understanding your time horizon

8. Address Ongoing Evaluation Needs

Your study or evaluation will require ongoing work and collaboration with your evaluation partner. Gain clarity around their responsibilities and roles as you move throughout the evaluation process. Ensure any data you collect or share with your evaluation partner is accurate, remains confidential, and doesn't contain identifying information about the study participants. Maintaining confidentiality for the participants in the study is a crucial component of the ongoing evaluation process.

INVEST STL'S *ROOTED* APPROACH

Our study included a baseline survey that was administered to all eligible *Rooted* applicants prior to the random selection process. After that, we issued an annual survey for all participants, both the resident investors (the 50 individuals who received the $22,000 investment) and the survey group (the eligible applicants who did not receive the investment).

To maintain confidentiality, our research partner didn't collect any identifying information about any participants, and de-identified numbers were used instead of names. For added confidentiality, survey responses went directly to the researchers, and we did not have access to individuals' survey information.

Our surveys included questions about financial well-being, assets, debts, social determinants of health, and feelings and perceptions of the neighborhood. Every annual survey contained questions from the baseline survey along with new questions to obtain information about the effects of the initiative. All survey respondents were compensated with a cash gift card for completion of the survey.

Since we held the relationships with both the resident investors and the survey group, we did additional outreach through phone calls and emails each year to remind people to complete their survey.

Even those not selected for funding remained interested in the initiative's progress. To maintain engagement, we hosted an appreciation dinner for the survey group after the first year, where we provided updates on the initiative and expressed our gratitude for their continued involvement in the study.

LESSONS LEARNED

Our first-year follow-up survey had a low completion rate, leading us to conduct extensive outreach through phone calls, emails, letters, and text messages to encourage participation. This reinforced the importance of additional, ongoing outreach, even after the recruitment phase.

Return to the ***Rooted* Replication Checklist of Major Steps** (pg. 7)

Closing

There's a significant need for wealth-based initiatives that provide opportunities for people to thrive, not just survive. We encountered skepticism due to the involvement of predatory developers in the neighborhood. However, once the West End and Visitation Park community members realized our initiative was legitimate, they embraced it enthusiastically. Participants now see *Rooted* as a genuine chance to improve their financial futures, contribute to and benefit from their neighborhood's growth, and maintain their place in their **chosen** community for the next generation.

Funders have also responded positively to the *Rooted* initiative, seeing it as an innovative and potentially effective solution for addressing displacement risks and economic mobility. They have expressed a strong interest in supporting similar initiatives locally and across the country and at greater scale.

Our goal is that the *Rooted Powerbook* will inspire and support similar wealth-building and anti-displacement projects across St. Louis and nationally. While we know you will adapt your project to meet the needs of your community and your organization, a successful anti-displacement project will include thorough planning, recruitment + selection, and implementation processes. We hope you will keep in mind the principles at the heart of *Rooted* — choice, autonomy, and trust — as you work on similar projects.

Rooted: Cultivating Black Wealth in Place is a wealth-building initiative created and piloted by our **Invest STL** Policy Design + Activation team. This team identifies, tries, evaluates, and facilitates potential solutions to systemic issues facing predominantly Black neighborhoods.

STAY ENGAGED

If you'd like regular updates on the *Rooted: Cultivating Black Wealth in Place* initiative, please sign up for updates on our website: **investstl.org/newsletter**.

If you have direct questions or feedback about the initiative, contact: **Rooted@investstl.org**.

For media inquiries, please contact: **apotter@investstl.org**.

ABOUT INVEST STL

We're dedicated to shifting the St. Louis Region's approach to neighborhood development.

Our Mission

Invest STL facilitates investment in the power of people and their neighborhoods to develop communities of justice and opportunity in places that continue to endure the legacy of systemic anti-Black racism.

Our Investment Areas

- Neighborhood Investing
- System Investing
- Influencing Policies + Decision-making
- Reframing Narratives

Our 20-Year Theory of Change

Our 20-Year Theory of Change focuses our resources and energy to build a thriving ecosystem of leaders, organizations, and neighborhoods to deliver on this vision in one generation and sunset Invest STL by 2042.

Connect with us

investstl.org

Invest.STL

@invest.stl

invest-stl

@investstl

Subscribe to our News + Updates:

investstl.org/news-updates

info@investstl.org | 314-399-8812

Quick links

Financial Planner Legal Agreements

Participant Agreement

Participant Guidebook

Financial Planner Guidebook

Beneficiary Deed Template

Powerbook Overview

Resources

We created resources as we developed our ***Rooted: Cultivating Black Wealth in Place*** pilot project that guided the interactions between resident investors and their financial planners. These worksheets established a foundation for launching their 1:1 meetings and created some uniformity in interactions across all resident investors and financial planners. We hope these resources help you save time on planning as you launch similar initiatives.

Goals Worksheet

*Complete and bring to the first meeting with your financial planner

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NAME **PHONE #**

EMAIL

PARTNER NAME (optional) **PARTNER PHONE #** (optional)

PARTNER EMAIL (optional)

PREFERED CONTACT METHOD

○ Phone ○ Email

WHO IS THE BEST PERSON TO CONTACT?

○ You ○ Your Partner ○ Both

PREFERED TIME FOR CONTACT

MONDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
TUESDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
WEDNESDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
THURSDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
FRIDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
SATURDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening
SUNDAY	○ Morning	○ Afternoon	○ Evening

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST IN YOUR LIFE?

WHAT ARE YOUR SHORT-TERM GOALS?

Financial / personal goals you want to complete within the next few months.

If your goals include a purchase include the estimated cost here

WHAT ARE YOUR INTERMEDIATE GOALS?

Financial / personal goals you want to complete within the next few years (1-5 years).

If your goals include a purchase include the estimated cost here

WHAT ARE YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS?

Financial / personal goals you want to complete throughout your lifetime (5+ years).

If your goals include a purchase include the estimated cost here

IS THERE ANYTHING WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU OR ANYTHING SPECIFIC YOU WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH US?

Monthly Budget

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NAME

Please complete this form with your typical monthly income & expenses. It's helpful to look at your previous bank statements to get an accurate look at your expenses.

INCOME

DATE	DISCRIPTION	AMOUNT

EXPENSES

DATE	DISCRIPTION	AMOUNT

EXPENSES CONTINUED

DATE	DISCRIPTION	AMOUNT

TOTAL INCOME

TOTAL EXPENSES

TOTAL SAVINGS

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Assets Worksheet

INVEST STL

ROOTED

NAME

Calculating the value of your assets will help provide you and your financial planner with a clear picture of your household assets and current debts. This can be a valuable tool to use as you are trying to reach your financial goals and planning for your future.

ASSETS	VALUE
Cash On Hand	
Savings	
Money Markets	
CDs	
Mutal Funds / Stocks / Bonds	
Annuities	
IRAs	
401k / 403b / 457	
Primary Residence	
Secondary Residence	
Cars	
Jewelry, Furs, Arts, Antiques	
Home Furnishings	
Life Insurance Cash Value	
Other:	
Total Assets	

DEBTS	VALUE
Mortgage	
Home Equity Loan	
Car Lone	
Credit Card Debt	
Student Loans	
Medical Bills	
Other	
Total Debt	

Total Assets	
Total Debt	
Total Networth	

$2,000 Immediate Needs Budget

INVEST STL

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NAME

Please complete the sections below once you have determined exactly how you plan to spend your $2,000 immediate needs funds keeping in mind that the funds can only be used to pay down debt, bills, or to establish an emergency savings. See the example provided.

EXPENSE	AMOUNT	PAYMENT DATE

$20,000 Allocation Plan

INVEST STL

ROOTED

NAME

Please complete the sections below once you've determined exactly how you plan to spend your $20,000 allocation. See the example provided.

WEATH BUILDING STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COST	ACTUAL COST

ROOTED

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